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II. ASIA-AFRICA

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Chinese Nationalists Cancel Air Reconnaissance Order

In an apparent effort to test American reaction, the Chinese Nationalist Ministry of Defense on 23 July issued an order to the Nationalist Air Force to conduct an escorted reconnaissance mission to photograph gun positions and airfields on the China mainland in the immediate vicinity of Chinmen Island. The order was canceled after an American protest.

Ambassador Drumright reports that the Chinese Nationalists have displayed a growing restiveness over the agreed restrictions on aerial reconnaissance activity over the mainland. The Nationalists appear genuinely concerned over Soviet Premier Khrushchev's references, in his talks with Averill Harriman, to rocket sites on the Chinese mainland, and are anxious to obtain full information on any such Chinese Communist capability. Minister of Defense Yu Ta-wei has informed Admiral Smoot, commander of the US Taiwan Defense Command, that the United States has a "moral obligation" to ensure that information is obtained on the alleged rocket sites.

At present, the Nationalists' standard reconnaissance aircraft is the RF-84F, which requires fighter escort. They have four supersonic RF-100s, however, and are scheduled to receive four high-performance RF-101s in August. Both of these types should be able to operate without escort, and a Nationalist request for permission to use them to photograph the coastal areas near Taiwan may be anticipated.

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